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SUBJECT: ARIAS FIRST-ROUND VICTORY ASSURED ON FEBRUARY 5;
HIS SUPPORT ESPECIALLY STRONG WITH THE OLD, THE LESS
EDUCATED, AND THE LOW INCOME

REF: A. SAN JOSE 193

[1](#)B. SAN JOSE 180

Summary

[1](#)1. The most scientific poll on the February 5 elections shows that Oscar Arias has twice the support of his closest rival, Otton Solis -- 49.6 percent to Solis's 25.4 percent. (Arias needs only 40 percent to avoid a runoff election.) Arias leads among all socioeconomic (education and income) groups except university-educated where Solis has the edge. Among low-income Costa Ricans, Arias has his biggest lead over Solis, 61 percent to 16 percent, which appears to refute Solis's claim that Arias is the "neoliberal" representative of the rich. Libertarian candidate Otton Guevara's support seems to be faltering, now down to 11.8 percent; he has 22 percent of first-time voters, however. None of the remaining 11 candidates scored better than 4 percent in the poll. While Arias's National Liberation Party (PLN) is projected to win slightly less than a majority in the Legislative Assembly, it will be twice as strong as the only party likely to oppose his policies. End summary.

[1](#)2. From January 15 to 23, Unimer Research International interviewed 2,423 Costa Rican adults house to house throughout the country on their voting preferences. The sample was considerably larger than competing polls (ref A), and the margin of error was 2.3 percent. Of the sample, 42 percent attended primary school, 34 percent secondary school, 23 percent university, and 1 percent had no schooling at all. In income, 33 percent were low, 60 percent middle, and 7 percent high.

Oscar Arias

[1](#)3. The polls showed Arias far ahead of his rivals with the support of 49.6 percent of probable voters. (Only 40 percent is needed to avoid a runoff election.) Moreover, Arias leads in all the demographic subgroups with one exception, the university-educated who prefer Otton Solis to Arias, 41 percent to 32 percent. Arias does better the older, less educated, and lower income the voter is. Of voters who had a party preference (and 34.4 percent did not), Arias's National Liberation Party (PLN) had the most support at 35.5 percent.

Otton Solis

[1](#)4. Otton Solis has the support of 25.4 percent of the voters, but his base is rather narrow socioeconomically and geographically, coming primarily from the better educated, higher income, and residents of the Central Valley (where San Jose is located). The party he founded, the Citizens' Action Party (PAC), is preferred by 13.6 percent of the voters. Solis is the candidate of the left and anti-CAFTA-DR.

Otto Guevara

[1](#)5. Libertarian Otto Guevara's support has showed a slight decline and is now at 11.8 percent. At age 45, he is the youngest of the three major candidates, and the youth of the voters appears to be an important factor favoring his candidacy. He wins 17 percent of voters under 30, but only 4 percent of the voters over 50. He has the support of 22 percent of first-time voters. Guevara's Libertarian Movement Party (ML), with the support of 6.2 percent of voters, is now tied for third place in voter sympathy with the Social Christian Unity Party (PUSC), which has governed Costa Rica for the last eight years.

All the Rest

[1](#)6. The other 11 candidates appear to be fading as the election draws closer. Their combined support is 13.2 percent with the best of them, Antonio Alvarez Desanti, getting 3.8 percent.

Legislative Assembly

[1](#)7. How effectively Oscar Arias will be able to govern will be largely dependent on the amount of support he has in the Legislative Assembly. The Unimer poll shows that Arias's PLN

is likely to obtain 28 seats, i.e., one short of a majority in the 57-member unicameral body. The major opposition party, PAC, is forecast to win 15 seats. The four other parties expected to win at least one seat, including 6 for ML and 6 for PUSC, are closer politically to the PLN than to PAC. Arias therefore should have a fairly compliant legislature, one that should support CAFTA-DR.

Comment

18. The most interesting result in this poll is the difference in voting preferences between high-income and low-income voters. The candidates who are considered to be of the right, Oscar Arias and Otto Guevara, whom leftist candidate Otton Solis accuses of being "neoliberal" representatives of the rich and wanting to hand the country on a platter to multinationals, do better in the polls with low-income voters than with high-income voters. In Arias's case, the difference (61 percent to 39 percent) is remarkable. For Solis, the defender of state monopolies, the result is reversed; he has 16 percent support from low-income voters and 35 percent from high-income voters. This seems to indicate that the statist economic policies that Solis advocates do not have the support of the poorest third of the population.

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